

CROSS WALK



LIGHTING Our Way - ANITA RETZLAFF

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The life force of Our Congregation

Ernie Baergen is gearing up to tackle the monumental task of transferring all membership statistics from our big brown ledger book onto a computer program. Into this ledger Helen and others before her have faithfully entered the details of our corporate life together. In typewritten form all baptisms, deaths, membership transfers, births, marriages and family history information are entered onto these large pages.

This book contains the history of Nutana Park Mennonite Church documenting the lives of the hundreds of people who have entered here in our 45 year history. The contents of this book will soon offer up its story to a round, flat, shiny disc.

Patrick wrote of the seasons in last month's newsletter. Further to his musings the image might be extended to that of our congregation for it too enters and exits seasons as well. Life ebbs and flows, comes and goes as people join in membership here and over time either die or leave.

In early years Nutana Park Mennonite witnessed many child dedications. Now in recent years the number of funerals may well exceed the number of babies born.

From a small community of first and second generation Canadians of German descent we have become a more diverse community of people who choose to enter into relationship here. We no longer come as relatives of interconnected families sharing a common history. That season has come and gone.

Large classes of baptismal candidates of the late 1970s and early 1980s are no more, but our community of adherents/ non-members continues to grow. New life always appears as gift and grace.

Indeed this congregation is entering a new season of the Spirit as life unfolds at Nutana Park. Just as the seasons of the church year come and go, as Advent flows into Christmas, Lent into Easter and on into Ordinary Time, the life force of this congregation remains strong and ever on the move.

The pages of our membership ledger reflect a changing landscape. The life of our community, soon to be held on a twelve centimetre disc, will continue to carry the story of God's faithful people into the future.

BOARD Report

- MITCH DAHL (VICE CHAIR)



Cross Walk

**Nutana Park
Mennonite Church**

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Our goal is to keep you informed and connected with one another. We would appreciate contact from you regarding any news items you may have about the joys and concerns of our church family.

**Articles for the next
Cross Walk are due on
November 21**

As a new member on the NPMC board I have been privileged to experience two valuable and unique traditions. First, each board meeting begins with a moment of voluntary sharing of highlights, joys, concerns or events that have touched our lives in the weeks leading up to the meeting. It is a valuable time of fellowship and reflection on what is a strong component of our church... community. Second, a meditation or reflection led by one of the board members. Most recently, Lynn Driedger led the group in a meditation based on the song "Hope is a Candle" from Sing the Story. He reflected on how the song looks at four characteristics of Christian life – hope, peace, love, joy – and then celebrates Christ as the light of our day, leading us in our daily lives. He then led members in singing the song. These reflections and meditations are a valuable framework in which to address the topics and tasks at hand as the board moves forward with its meeting activities.

Our pastoral team continues to be busy both in our church family and in the community at large. Of special note is the tremendous contribution by Lynn Driedger and his committee in organizing a wonderful 2010 Church Retreat at Shekinah. Great weather and fellowship combined to offer a fantastic weekend for those involved. To facilitate plans and preparation for the 2011 retreat, co-chairs for next years event have

already been determined – Lori Weiler-Thiessen and Alta Peachey.

The buildings and grounds project and planning is moving forward with the mandate determined at the congregational meeting on October 17. Carl Wiens has dedicated a tremendous amount of time and energy to thorough consideration and implementation of the planned foyer renovation and paving projects, in addition to the day-to-day maintenance of our facilities. Fundraising for these projects will begin immediately. Stay tuned and watch your mailboxes for details.

Ernie Bergen has graciously offered to establish a computer database for our church membership and family records. We currently have a large paper document that is updated accordingly. This is a valuable piece of our history and identity as a community. As such, the computer based application will provide a secure and less cumbersome record, as well as a back-up to the original document.

The strength of the NPMC community is very evident in these board meetings as we move forward in the church and in the community via worship, education, caring & visitation, missions and conference activities. Your support of these initiatives and your generosity as a congregation does not go unnoticed. It is the foundation on which these programs are built. Thank you.

CROSS WALK

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Ruth Mission Society / Marg Krause

Twenty Ruth Mission Society members met on Tuesday, October 12. After the regular meeting, Ag Peters introduced the guest speaker, Viril Masden from Interval House. Viril has worked at Interval House for twenty-six years. Interval House is a safe shelter for women and children who have become victims of violence. It has room for thirty-four people. It is a place where, with the help of counselors, they can make plans for a safe life. The stay is limited to 30 days. They also might be able to provide continued safe accommodation after leaving Interval House. This second stage housing is Adelle House. It is a 12 unit apartment complex, offering the women and children, family oriented, affordable housing for up to one year.

It offers safety, counseling and programs to help the families make positive choices. These houses are funded by the government, United Way, city of Saskatoon and private donations. Donations of clothing for children and adults, dishes, cutlery, towels, and single bed sheets are accepted on Tuesdays and Thursdays. No electric appliances or cribs can be accepted due to safety issues. Donations of money are always welcome.

Viril appeared to enjoy her job and was able to help women in crisis find a refuge from abuse and to make a safe home for themselves and their children.

It is good for us to learn about various services available that show respect and compassion to people in need.

Nutana Park Mennonite Church

RUTH Mission Society

- MARG KRAUSE

BURNED Biscuits - AUTHOR UNKNOWN



When I was a little boy, my mom liked to make breakfast food for dinner every now and then. I remember one night in particular when she had made breakfast after a long, hard day at work.

On that evening so long ago, my mom placed a plate of eggs, sausage and extremely burned biscuits in front of my dad. I remember waiting to see if anyone noticed. Yet all my dad did was reach for his biscuit, smile at my mom and ask me how my day was at school. I don't remember what I told him that night, but I do remember watching him smear butter and jelly on that biscuit and eat every bite!

When I got up from the table that evening, I remember hearing my mom apologize to my dad for burning the biscuits. And I'll never forget what he said: "Honey, I love burned biscuits." Later that night, I went to kiss Daddy good night and I asked him if he really liked his biscuits burned.

He wrapped me in his arms and said, "Your Momma put in a hard day at work today and she's real tired. And besides, a little burnt biscuit never hurt anyone!"

Life is full of imperfect things ... and imperfect people. I'm not the best at hardly anything, and I forget birthdays and anniversaries just like everyone else. But what I've learned over the years is that learning to accept each others faults and choosing to celebrate each others differences is one of the most important keys to creating a healthy, growing and lasting relationship. We could extend this to any relationship. In fact, understanding is the base of any relationship, be it a husband-wife or parent-child or friendship! "Don't put the key to your happiness in someone else's pocket - keep it in your own." So please pass me a biscuit, and yes, the burned one will do just fine.

FAITH, Film & Fiction

- PATTY FRIESEN

Zeitoun by Dave Eggers was my book group's choice this month. It is about a New Orleans family and their experiences during Hurricane Katrina. The hurricane was not the only disaster the city experienced. The social disintegration and anarchy perhaps was the greater disaster. Soon to be available in the church library.

Sweetness in the Belly by Camilla Gibb has been a great listen on my way to work. The story of a British Muslim woman in Ethiopia during the famine years and subsequent emigration of many Ethiopians to the UK is a mind-broadening read, increasing my understanding of immigrant's experience. Available in the church library.

Inspector Lewis and Foyle's War are recent DVD discoveries of mine. They are classic BBC detective mysteries set with intrigue, humour and fascinating characters. Available in the public libraries.

Gallery

is that you?



Above: Shekinah kids having fun in the mud
photo by Kurt Sawatzk

Circle Right: Thanksgiving display
photo by Jake Nickel



Below: The lighthouse keeping watch at Peggy's Cove, NS and The red rocky shore of Cape Breton, NS
photo by Hedio Borne

Below Left: Marlie Regehr & Ben Leis were married on July 10



We Rejoice With

Bonnie Wyse on the arrival of a grandson, Weston Edward. He is a son to Daryl Wyse & Cindy Paproski and a brother to sister Madison

Helen Unrau on the arrival of greatgranddaughter, Mya Emily. She is a daughter to Neil & Lisa Knorr, sister to Connor, and granddaughter to Vern & Elvira Unrau

Janet Barnes as she received the Award of Merit from the Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals

New members of NPMC: Grace Kroeker, Diane Beaulé, Gordon and Lynne Driedger-Enns, Jack Driedger and Duff Warkentin

Anne Retzlaff and her family as they celebrate her 80th birthday

Our Condolences to

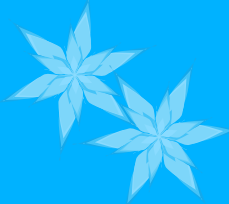
Frank & Irma Gerbrandt on the death of Frank's brother, Clarence Gerbrandt



Church Family NEWS



WHAT Do You Do? -SUSAN ENS FUNK



The first question James and I hear, from people when we tell them we are on leave and living in Winnipeg is, "What do you do?" We can tell the usual answer to the question is to say how one is employed but we are not currently employed so that answer is out. So what do we do?

We have taken this portion of our year to focus on our family. Both our nuclear family and our extended family in Winnipeg. We are spending time playing games with our kids, going on family bike rides, going to the pool and hanging out together. We try to get together with James' sister and brother-in-law once a week and with his parents a couple of times. The kids are taking sewing lessons with Oma and we have meals together periodically. This is an important part of what we do.

We are trying to get our physical selves into fantastic shape. A portion of every day is spent exercising. For James, this is a year to improve as a marathon runner. He has high hopes for his 40th year personal best. His training is a major focus for our year. My hopes are not as lofty, no marathons for me, but I do hope to get into great

condition and I toy with the idea of a half-marathon. I'm not sure how serious my thoughts on that are. Exercise takes up most of the morning most days.

We are investing time in our hobbies. We spend time reading and exploring ideas. I've recently discovered the genre called 'memoirs', thanks to Patty Friesen. I am delightedly reading about the life and times of all kinds of people, famous and ordinary. The most recent of which was "Glass Castle" by Jeanette Walls. It was a well-told and poignant story of childhood resilience.

Some days I'm amazed how quickly the time goes and how little of consequence gets accomplished. We do laundry, clean the apartment, feed our selves, sleep. All of these things make up the time in the day. What we don't do is make money. One of the terms I've used to describe our year is 'integrated retirement'. We are retired for the year, we just have to go back to work next year and the next 14 after that. We have taken a year in the middle of our work lives to be a family rather than to be part of the economic engine. It is a good change.

FAMILY Interrupted

GERALDINE BALZER

Right: Some of the many Balzer children

Below: Cousin Katya sharing photos with Mom and Kerstin Watermelon and Rollkuchen feast on the banks of the river Tok



This summer, our family set off on an adventure to explore our heritage and experience Ukraine and Russia. On August 13th, we flew 1000 km southeast of Moscow to the city of Samara. We disembarked our Aeroflot plane and scoured the faces in the crowd hoping someone would be there to meet us. Why were we on the steppes of Russia? In 1926, my grandfather, Peter Balzer, and his younger brother John left the colony of Neu Samara for a new life in Canada. They left behind parents and six siblings. My grandfather was 24 at the time, and I can't imagine what went through his mind or the mind of his father as they left. Did they know they would never see each other again? Did my great grandfather hope to raise enough money so the entire family could immigrate? We will probably never know the answers. One sister and her husband were able to emigrate to Brazil and the remainder of the family remained, caught in Stalinist Russia. We were now waiting to meet the family that had stayed behind.

As we continued to scan the crowd, looking, I'm sure, very much like foreigners who spoke no Russian, a woman in a head scarf approached and asked, "Bist du die Peters?" And so we met Agnes, the youngest of my father's Russian cousins, and her husband, Konstantin. I must admit, I was quite relieved to have been found. Mail

between Russia and the rest of the world is very slow, so we were travelling on faith that they actually had received the letter that had our flight times.

We retrieved luggage, clambered into the van and were off on stage one of our journey. An hour later, we arrived at Agnes's home and met her nine children and two brothers, Jasch and Hans. We quickly realized that while the Balzer name may be in danger of extinction in Canada, it is doing well in Russia. After a supper of summer borscht and many curious glances from the youngest children, we piled into two Ladas and continued our journey east. We had no idea how far into rural Russia we would be travelling, but after another 250 km, we arrived in the tiny village of Krasikova where we were greeted by Jasch's wife Susana and Tanja, the oldest of their daughters. Even though it was now 2:00 a.m., the hot borscht was ladled into bowls so we wouldn't go to bed hungry.

In the morning we were greeted by a row of smiling faces – Jasch and Susanna's nine children. We also met my great uncle who was only 6 years old when my grandfather left Russia. Onkel Willi, or Opa as everyone called him, had just celebrated his 90th birthday.

Krasikova is one of 14 villages that made up the Mennonite colony of Neu Samara. Two wide streets run through the village with large yards and identical houses on each yard. Huge gar-



Left: The house where my grandfather was born and raised and where Onkel Willi lived until 8 years ago

Below: Jasch & Susanna' home -a typical Mennonite home on a typical Mennonite street in a typical Mennonite village
all photos by Geraldine Balzer

dens, chickens, turkeys, rabbits, and cows all have a place on these yards. In many ways, it was like stepping back in time, and I could imagine my grandparents walking these streets. Over the next days, we immersed ourselves in the low German language and life in rural Russia. Four of Onkel Willi's children live in the village, and they have provided him with 40 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. One son and his family have moved to Germany. To my best guess, Onkel Willi has about 55 grandchildren! Two of my grandfather's sisters and their children have also emigrated to Germany, so the Balzer clan is not going to disappear soon.

I saw the many ways the Stalinist era interrupted family. My grandfather was able to exchange sporadic letters with his siblings, but we really knew nothing of them and they knew nothing of us. The forced labour camps took the life of one of my grandfather's brothers and Onkel Willi barely survived. His girlfriend waited for him and they began their family when they were 35, so my father's cousins are my age and their children range in age from 4-30.

Our time with family was amazing. The awkwardness of meeting strangers was not there and we were welcomed with open arms and generosity. Life has not been easy and continues to be difficult, but lived with joy and faith. The four siblings have taken over the

collective farm and have a dairy with about 50 cows, a hog operation, and 700 hectares of cropland. They had not had rain since April, so the harvest was at risk and the garden yields were low. There is no money for new machinery or fertilizer, kitchen renovations or sophisticated plumbing. But there are families who always have time for each other. We feasted on traditional MennoMeals of zwieback and plumena, rollkuchen and watermelon. We ate garden fresh tomatoes with every meal and watermelon twice daily.

On Sunday, we donned our headscarves, and worshiped together. While they now belong to the unregistered Baptist union, the majority of worshippers came from Mennonite stock. The language of worship is Russian so that the church is inviting to those who do not have low German as a language. Music was a very important part of the service and familiar hymns are sung in four parts. We later learned that the song leader had deliberately chosen hymns translated from German or English, hoping we would feel at home in the service. There were four or five short meditations prepared by lay members of the congregation. One of my cousins translated each meditation into Low German so we had a sense of what was said. Onkel Willi, the eldest member of the congregation, sat at the front as the elder and the family members hoped he wouldn't fall asleep



during the service. Kerstin decided that the church could easily be named Balzer Mennonite since our relatives made up a very significant portion of the congregation.

Earlier we had visited the former Mennonite villages of Ukraine, sad places that were in disrepair and only carried historical memories. Krasikova was a wonderful contrast to that portion of our trip. Following the Sunday service, Alina walked home with her same-age female cousins (there is lots of gender separation) and it was impossible to determine which Balzer was the Canadian – the familial resemblance was obvious. Faith and hospitality, two things that were core to my grandfather are still core to our Russian family. Leaving after four days was difficult because in so many ways, we were home. I'm already thinking about the next trip and hoping that our family is never again interrupted.

Upcoming Events & IMPORTANT NOTES



November 10
MEDA Dinner
 An Evening in the Ukraine
 Fellowship Centre, Bethany Manor
 6:00 pm
 Cost \$16/person
 Ph: 242-9019

November 6
RJC Corporation Annual General Meeting
 5:00 pm
Followed by Fundraiser & Banquet
 6:00 pm
 RJC Gym

November 5-6
MCC Sask Encounter & Annual General Meeting
 7:30-4:00
 West Portal Church
 Saskatoon, SK

November 7
Questions of Faith
 Join Group Discussion with Patrick & Anita
 East wing Sunday School Room
 During potluck



Quote BY **ELIZABETH GOUDGE**
 submitted by Winona Senner

*In this world we possess nothing but the passing moment
 Polish it as you would a jewel.
 It is the only wealth to which you have any right.
 All your other moments belong to God alone.*